

REMARKS

Claims 1-5, and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Mandel '544. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

In the claimed invention, a container is provided that is used to stack sheets processed by a first image forming device. Information related to the stacked sheets is also stored in a memory that is provided in the container. The container is detachable to allow it to be transported, along with the stacked sheets, to a second image forming device. The stacked sheets can then be processed by the second image forming device based on the information stored in the memory.

Mandel '544 discloses a mailbox unit that is essentially a sorting device. The mailbox unit is described as a "universal" unit that can be attached to many types of devices including, for example, printers and facsimile machines. There is no disclosure in Mandel '544, however, that the mailbox unit is intended to be transported between devices, such that sheets processed by one device can be subsequently processed by a second different device.

Further, Mandel '544 fails to disclose a memory as claimed. A controller is provided to control the operation of the mailbox unit, and it can be assumed that at least some memory is associated with the controller. The examiner repeatedly refers to column 30, lines 52-55 of Mandel '544 as disclosing the writing of information to a memory associated with mailbox unit. The specific lines referred to by the examiner are limited to a situation in which empty bins are identified by the controller and are assigned to new users. Accordingly, the information that is stored in memory is information relating the bin to a user. Mandel '544 also refers to assigning passwords to the users so they can access bins, but again, the information relates to the identification of a user with a bin. In Mandel '544, the memory does not contain information related to the stacked sheets that would enable another device to process the stacked sheets.

Claim 4, for example, states that the writing device writes information relating to at least one selected from the group consisting of sheet size, print number, number of sheets, number of copies, sheet stacking method, material, page order, and image forming apparatus identity. This type of information would not be stored by the controller 100 of Mandel '544 as such information is irrelevant with respect to simply sorting documents into specific mailboxes.

In addition, claim 5 requires writing at least one selected from the group consisting of information for distinguishing a sheet with an abnormality and information for distinguishing a set of sheets that include a sheet with an abnormality. There is no disclosure of the storage of this type of information in the controller of Mandel '544. Contrary to the examiner's assertions,

the fact that the system of Mandel '544 can handle oversize sheets based on a signal sent by the printer does not mean that such information would be stored by the controller. Instead, the controller would simply react to such a signal.

With respect to claim 8, applicants note Mandel '544 does not disclose a feeding device that feeds sheets out of the container. Mandel '544 only discloses sorting documents into various bins. There is no disclosure of any type of mechanism for feeding documents out of the bins once they have been placed in the bins. The examiner has failed to specifically point out where a feeding device is shown in Mandel '544. Absent such a showing, the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn.

In order for a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 to be proper, each and every element of the claims must be found within the cited references. In this case, the cited reference fails to disclose several elements of the claims at issue. Applicants submit the rejection is therefore improper and should be withdrawn.

Claim 6 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious in view of Mandel '544 and Regimbal. Applicants submit that Regimbal fails to overcome the basic deficiency of Mandel '544 discussed above. Accordingly, the combination of references, even if proper, could not yield the claimed invention.

Applicants have added new claims 26 and 27 to further claim the features of the disclosed invention. Applicants submit that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest the features set forth in claims 26 and 27.

In view of the above, all of the claims in this case are believed to be in condition for allowance, notice of which is respectfully urged.

Respectfully submitted,

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DATE

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